

RE: RM-11699 Encryption of Amateur Radio Communications

To whom it may concern;

My name is Art Miller, and I'm an Amateur Radio operator (KC7SDA), I recently read that there was a proposal to allow encrypted communications on the Amateur bands.

I feel that this would be a good step to take, we have been in a digital age for quite some time and the days of sending unencrypted passwords and login information is simply not done anymore.

The main argument against allowing encryption is that criminals can use it. I would like to point out the fallacy in this logic is that criminals will do whatever they want regardless of what the laws are (which means that if they want to they can take a radio, attach it to a computer and send encrypted data over any band or frequency even if they aren't licensed).

I recently attended a local club meeting where there was a presentation on a new radio that a group is developing called a Universal Digital Radio (nwdigitalradio.com). Its one of the first truly software defined radios of its kind. The presenter was talking about how with increased data rates they could link several of these radios and provide all sorts of emergency communications. Among the examples were phone banks, computer networks/internet connections, D-Star, APRS and winlink email.

After hearing the presentation and thinking about it, I could see where a few of these radios could be used in an emergency situation where one is connected to the internet, and another radio is connected to a small network of computers. This network of computers could be used for anything including providing email access for private or emergency use or it can be used with existing emergency computer networks to get shelters back online for families to reconnect after a disaster.

Another reason to allow encryption is because there is a group called HamWAN (hamwan.org) that is trying to form a network using computers and commercial equipment. The goal of this network is to provide a wide area network to hams for internet access. With the current rules they cannot check their email accounts as most email service providers require the user log into some sort of secure server using a form of encryption to pass information back and forth (such as commands, creating and sending an email, etc).

In conclusion, allowing encryption over the air would not be a 'death sentence' that most hams are claiming it would be. Criminals and terrorists have other more effective ways of communicating (such as cell phones and the internet). I have not yet heard one case where a terrorist was caught because they were using ham radio as a means to communicate their encrypted plans. For our hobby to evolve and for us to develop new technologies we need to have the freedom to do so.

Thank you for reading this.

Sincerely,

Art Miller
KC7SDA